

Message Text

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71

ACTION NEA-10

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R 121005Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3981

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FOLLOWING SENT ACTION NEW DELHI INFO BOMBAY AND CALCUTTA
FROM MADRAS FEB 11, 1976 REPEATEDFOR YOU

QUOTE

MADRAS 0274

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJ: FORMAL MERGER OF TWO CONGRESS PARTIES IN TAMIL NADU
ANNOUNCED

1. THE FORMAL MERGER OF THE CONGRESS (R) AND THE
PRO-MERGER CONGRESS (O) IN TAMIL NADU WAS ANNOUNCED
FEBRUARY 10 IN MADRAS BY MRS MARAGATHAM CHANDRASEKHAR,
AICC GENERAL SECRETARY. SHE SAID THE FORMAL MERGER
OCCURRED AT A LUNCHEON MEETING OF LEADERS OF THE TWO
GROUPS THE PREVIOUS DAY, THAT A NEW LEADER FOR THE
UNITED CONGRESS PARTY WILL BE CHOSEN BY PRIME MINISTER
GANDHI AND AICC PRESIDENT K.K. BAROOAH, AND THAT
MRS GANDHI IS LIKELY TO ANNOUNCE THE NAME OF THE NEW
LEADER, WHEN SHE PARTICIPATES IN A UNITY CONFERENCE OF
THE TWO CONGRESS PARTIES IN MADRAS FEBRUARY 15.

2. MRS CHANDRASEKHAR ALSO STATED THAT SOME DMK
MEMBERS HAVE EXPRESSED A WISH TO JOIN THE CONGRESS (R)
BUT THEY WOULD NOT BE ADMITTED. IF THE DMK MEMBERS
HAD COME SOMETIME AGO, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT.

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TODAY IT WAS A SUSPICIOUS MOVE AND THE BACKGROUNDS OF

THOSE SEEKING ADMISSION WOULD HAVE TO BE CHECKED,
SHE ADDED.

3. CONGRESS PARTY LEADERS ARE MAKING A BIG EFFORT TO
GET A HUGE TURNOUT FOR MRS GANDHI. THE CONGRESS
NEWSPAPERS ARE CALLING FOR A 2-MILLION TURNOUT,
BUT A CONGRESS OFFICIAL I TALKED WITH LAST NIGHT SAID
THEY WERE AIMING FOR ABOUT A MILLION, AND THAT THEY
WOULD BE USING MORE THAN 3000 BUSES, AND LORRIES, AS
WELL AS SEVERAL TRAINS TO BRING IN PEOPLE FROM THE
DISTRICTS.

4. THERE HAS BEEN SPECULATION THAT R. VENKATARAMAN, WHO
WAS A SUCCESSFUL INDUSTRIES MINISTER IN THE CONGRESS
GOVERNMENT HERE IN THE 1960S AND LATER A MEMBER OF
THE GOI PLANNING COMMISSION, WILL BE CHOSEN AS THE LEADER
OF THE COMBINED PARTIES. VENKATARAMAN, WHO IS NOW
EDITOR OF SWARAJYA, ASSOCIATED HIMSELF, BUT NOT ACTIVELY,
WITH KAMARAJ AND CONGRESS (O) AFTER HE CEASED TO BE A
MEMBER OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION. HE IS PROBABLY THE
LEAST CONTROVERSIAL AND MOST RESPECTED OF THE
OLDER CONGRESS LEADERS, BUT ALSO SUFFERS THE POLITICAL
LIABILITY OF BEING A BRAHMIN. THE CONGRESS OFFICIAL
WITH WHOM I TALKED LAST NIGHT SAID HE DOUBTED THAT
VENKATARAMAN WOULD TAKE THE JOB, AND WENT ON TO SAY
THAT MRS. CHANDRASEKHAR WOULD NOT BE CHOSEN.
NONE OF THE NAMES HE MENTIONED AS POSSIBILITIES WERE
HOUSEHOLD WORDS.

5. THE PRO-MERGER CONGRESS (O) LEADERSHIP CLAIMED
THAT OVER 60 PERCENT OF THE UNDIVIDED CONGRESS (O) SUPPORTED
THEM. WHETHER THIS IS TRUE REMAINS TO BE SEEN BUT
THE UNITED CONGRESS IS EXPECTED TO GIVE THE RULING
CONGRESS A REASONABLY STRONG BASE AND ORGANIZATION IN
THE STATE FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE UNDIVIDED CONGRESS
WAS VOTED OUT OF OFFICE IN 1969. SIGNED EAVES
UNQUOTE
SAXBE

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